

Case study — Paripurnata

Residents of the winding streets that constitute the Taltala area of Calcutta were used to the sight of a short woman, wandering around aimlessly, muttering away at nobody in particular. Her shabby, tattered clothes, dishevelled and matted hair, listless eyes and exposed waif-like body covered with sores and open wounds made for a pitiable sight.



Some insensitive kids would taunt her and call her “pagli”. Rani, all of 25 years, was originally a resident of Tillouthu village, situated in Rohtas district, Bihar. She suffered from a mental illness, and her condition had worsened over time for want of appropriate treatment. Unable to bear the torment inflicted by the villagers, Rani ran away from home and ended up in Calcutta.

When the local residents were unable to tolerate the ‘nuisance’ that Rani created around their homes, they sought the help of the local police, who admitted her to the Calcutta Pavlov

Hospital, where she underwent treatment for nearly eight months.

Subsequently, Rani was brought to **Paripurnata** for psychosocial rehabilitation, where she was treated with Pharmacotherapy, Psychotherapy and Occupational Therapy, besides being trained with domestic and social skills to help her lead a normal life.

During the course of her rehabilitation, Rani was able to recall her address in Tillouthu. This was enough motivation for the staff at **Paripurnata** to locate her family. With a little assistance from the local authorities, Rani was repatriated with her mother.

With tears streaming down her face, Rani’s mother embraced her long lost daughter. “We all thought she was dead, it was four years ago that Rani had disappeared”, recounted a village elder to whom Rani was like a daughter.

Set up in 1992, **Paripurnata**, the first of its kind in West Bengal, is a halfway home for women who, abandoned by their families, had been confined in jails or mental institutions. Endeavouring to offer “hope for wholeness” to these unfortunate women, the organisation provides them temporary refuge at the Centre.

Paripurnata selects eight women at a time from Calcutta’s Pavlov Mental Institute and subsequently treats them intensively for a period of nine months, while at the same time preparing them for rehabilitation and helping them integrate into the wider society. Post repatriation, the organisation keeps in touch with its ex-residents for a period of three years through family counselling, medicines and home visits.

The Trust’s mental health initiative partly focuses on developing approaches to cater to the needs of destitute, mentally ill persons. Through its Small Grants programme, the Trust has supported **Paripurnata** since January 2005, towards providing intensive skill and vocational training to the ex-residents of **Paripurnata**, and strengthening the capacities of its staff to treat, shelter and rehabilitate mentally ill women.

Encouraged by the dedication of the team and the work of the organisation, the Trust is considering continuing its support to **Paripurnata** over the coming year.